

Short communications

Recent records of the Blue Quail *Coturnix chinensis* from Tanzania

This widespread but seemingly local species is perhaps under-recorded due to its preference for long-grass habitats and the difficulty in getting it to flush. Fewer than five birds have been recorded during the past 30 years in Tanzania, probably due to a reduction in the number of observers rather than a decline in actual numbers. Also, there has certainly been a change in field techniques: nowadays, fewer observers walk and fewer still use dogs to flush birds. The Tanzania Atlas Project has the following three recent Blue Quail records on file:

1. An adult male ringed at Mikumi village on 24 December 1990 by A.D. Bramley. The bird was caught in atypical habitat and may have been attracted to lights while moving at night. It weighed 33 g at 11:00 with a winglength of 72 mm.
2. An adult male was flushed from a long-grass *dambo* in Ruvu South Forest Reserve, 35 km southwest of Dar es Salaam on 17 October 1993. The small size and dark plumage, with rufous on the upper wing identified the species as it flew above the grass and dropped to ground some 20 m away.
3. On 10 May 1991 a dead 'quail' was found in Bukoba on the western shore of Lake Victoria. The specimen was kept in a freezer until we could view it in November 1993, when we confirmed that it was indeed a Blue Quail. The bird probably died by hitting a window while moving at night. We thank Dr Chris Bosche for retaining the specimen and allowing us to examine it.

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Zanzibar records of Arctic Skua *Stercorarius parasiticus* and Pomarine Skua *S. pomarinus*

On 19 January 1994, 1 km off shore and southwest of Zanzibar town, we observed a subadult (or possibly adult) light morph Pomarine Skua *Stercorarius pomarinus* chasing, back and forth, a flock of Crested Terns *Sterna bergii*. Despite the rolling of our boat, the deep wings and stoutly-built body were striking. While the flight was heavier and more powerful than that of an Arctic Skua *S. parasiticus*, no protruding central tail feathers could be seen. Fresh and dark inner primaries contrasted strongly with light brown old outer primaries and a light brown band across the inner wing formed by the light bases of the old secondaries; old secondary coverts were lacking. This upper-wing pattern closely resembled the second-winter light morph Pomarine